

REMARKS

Claims 1-19 are all the claims pending in the application.

Applicants note that the Examiner has not returned the PTO-1449 forms submitted with the Information Disclosure Statements filed on February 28, 2002 and May 24, 2002. For the Examiner's convenience, Applicants are enclosing a copy of the above noted PTO-1449 forms. Applicants kindly request that the Examiner consider the references listed on the PTO-1449 forms and return the initialed and signed forms with the next Office paper.

I. Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 101

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-16 under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as being directed to non-statutory subject matter.

In particular, the Examiner asserts that the claimed "process might be performed without the aid of any technology and therefore the claimed method is not within the technological arts" (see Office Action at page 2) (emphasis added).

Regarding claims 1-7 and 13-16, Applicants note that, contrary to the assertion of the Examiner, these claims are not method claims. Instead, each of these claims is an apparatus claim. Accordingly, at least with respect to claims 1-7 and 13-16, Applicants respectfully submit that the above-noted rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 101 is inapplicable, and that claims 1-7 and 13-16 are clearly directed to statutory subject matter.

With respect to method claims 8-12, Applicants have amended independent claims 8, 10 and 11 to recite that the "key generation step" is performed electronically. Accordingly, as claims 8, 10 and 11 recite the step of "a key generation step of electronically generating an intermediate key...", Applicants respectfully submit that

claims 8, 10 and 11 clearly require the aid of technology, and therefore, fall within the technological arts. Claim 9 depends from claim 8, and claim 12 depends from claim 11.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-16 are directed to statutory subject matter under 35 U.S.C. 101. Accordingly, Applicants kindly request that the above-noted rejection be withdrawn.

II. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 17-19 are allowed.

III. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may best be resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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